

REMARKS

Claims 1 and 3-15 are all the claims pending in the application. Claims 1 and 9 have been amended herein. Claims 4 and 11 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. This Response, submitted in reply to the Office Action dated January 9, 2009, is believed to be fully responsive to each point of rejection raised therein. Accordingly, favorable reconsideration on the merits is respectfully requested.

Preliminary Matters

Applicant wishes to thank the Examiner for indicating that the subject matter of claims 4, 5, 8, 11, 12, and 15 was allowable if rewritten in independent form including the limitations of the base claims and any intervening claims.

Claim Rejections- 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, and 14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Isobe (JP 9-58227, of record). Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

As discussed above, the Examiner has indicated that the subject matter of claims 4 and 11 is allowable if rewritten in independent form including the limitations of the base claims and any intervening claims. Claims 1 and 9 have been amended herein to include the subject matter of claims 4 and 11, respectively. Therefore, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 1 and 9 are therefore allowable over the applied reference. Further, Applicant also submits that all claims depending from claims 1 and 9 are patentable at least by virtue of their dependency. Therefore, Applicant respectfully requests that the rejections set forth in the office action of January 9, 2009 be withdrawn for at least these reasons.

Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880 via EFS payment screen. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: March 25, 2009